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## EDITORIAL

### Medicare 1965

SELDOM HAS A deliberative body in general session found it so necessary to dwell on one topic so extensively as did the House of Delegates of the American Medical Association at its regular meeting last month in New York.

While 76 resolutions were placed in the hopper of the House, nine dealt with the prospective effects of and the attitude to be taken toward HR 6675, the Medicare bill which has swept through the House of Representatives and the Finance Committee of the Senate and is widely known as the President's Number One objective in this session of the Congress.

Decisions on the bulk of the 76 resolutions introduced were arrived at with a minimum of controversy or even discussion. This held true even for seven resolutions arising from the report of the President's Commission on Heart Disease, Cancer and Stroke. As to the resolutions dealing with Medicare, however, discussions were long, heated and varied.

Underlying the entire discussion was a series of actions and declarations of principle taken in the past in anticipation of the potential enactment of this sweeping legislation. It must be said that the AMA House of Delegates has never taken a defeatist attitude on this form of the provision of medical services. It has never accepted the tenet that this is inevitable and that physicians should join it in an effort to guide it.

Rather, the AMA House of Delegates has consistently voted to use all possible ethical means to prevent the enactment of medicare legislation with its overtones of compulsion, control and dic-

tatorship. In following this path the House has enacted statements of principles, chief among which are the Bauer Resolution adopted in June 1961, and a statement of principles for standards of health care programs approved in February of this year. These, together with Section 6 of the Principles of Medical Ethics, place the American Medical Association squarely on record that (1) the health of the patient comes first and (2) physicians are the best judges of what is best for the patient and the means to achieve the optimum results.

At last month's meeting these statements (see pages 57 and 60) were not a subject of debate but of interpretation as to the best means of conformation. Among the nine resolutions offered, some asked outright that non-participation in government programs of health care be adopted as the best method of opposition to a legislative proposal deemed inimical to the optimum standards of medical care. Others were more moderate in urging the maintenance of principles already adopted in order to protect the rights of the patient.

While these resolutions were under discussion, the grass roots were heard from in a number of telegrams and phone messages to members of the House of Delegates, some urging non-participation, some decrying the statements made by AMA's incoming president, Doctor James Z. Appel, in support of law and order, some offering subjective proposals.

Out of this welter of material the House of Delegates distilled a substitute resolution which the House approved. It reaffirmed earlier statements of principle, called for conferences to assure high quality medical care for patients, asked for the appointment of representative physicians to advisory committees in all federal health care programs, decried the compulsory inclusion of physicians under the Social Security laws and requested